

If the proposed distinctions and orientations toward argumentation I have presented seem promising, there are many open questions deserving further inquiry. The characterization of patterns of objections and successful and inappropriate ways of responding to types of objections seems to me to be in a very undeveloped state. The analytic epistemological literature that emphasizes the "undefeated" condition does provide some useful suggestions, but is not very systematic. In addition, textual confusions themselves may, when analyzed, provide useful cautionary advice for writing and criticism, and could serve as a basis for exercises involving dialogues of argument and criticism in which problems arise from a critic's misunderstanding of a speaker's argumentative intent. A pragmatics of argumentative speech acts might be an appropriate way to approach some of the mysterious "talking through" exchanges so familiar but perplexing to us all.

Notes

¹I use Robert Fogelin's *Understanding Arguments* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), Chapter Two, to introduce the notions of discounting and so on. I've used the diagramming approaches of either Stephen Thomas's *Practical Reasoning* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981) or Michael Scriven's *Reasoning* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976). ●

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Ryle On (And For) Informal Logic

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In their account of the rise of the informal logic movement, R.H. Johnson and J.A. Blair make several important judgments. [1, p.5] They find the movement characterized by two features. One is "a turn in the direction of actual (i.e., real-life, ordinary, everyday) arguments in their native habitat of public discourse and persuasion, together with an attempt to deal with the problems that occur as a result of that focus." The other is "a growing disenchantment with the capacity of

formal logic to provide standards of good reasoning that illuminate the argumentation of ordinary discourse." In what follows, I accept these as **defining** features. That is, I'll regard them as necessary if not sufficient conditions for the existence of the IL movement.

Johnson and Blair go on to estimate "only three monographs of significance to informal logic" as having appeared in the last quarter-century. These include Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* [2], Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *La Nouvelle Rhétorique* [3], both published in 1958 (though Perelman's work wasn't translated into English till 1969), and Hamblin's *Fallacies* [4], published in 1970. These estimates of significance and/or influence are perhaps as minimally arbitrary as such things can well be while a movement is still in progress. Let's not underestimate the task of the estimators. Admittedly it's tough to try to chart even roughly the force, mass, and directional flow of a movement while one is in the middle of it and contributing to it.

Yet it's worth noting that five years before Toulmin's and Perelman's works came out, a major philosopher made a major statement (actually, a position paper) **pro** informal and **contra** formal logic. This statement, moreover, discernibly influenced Toulmin's and Perelman's works. The philosopher was Gilbert Ryle and the statement his set of eight Turner Lectures, delivered in Cambridge in Lent Term 1953 and published the following year as *Dilemmas*. [5] For anyone interested in informal logic, the importance of Ryle's lectures generally (but especially the last, "Formal and Informal Logic") can hardly be gainsaid. In fact, I would say of them what Johnson and Blair say of Toulmin's, Perelman's, and Hamblin's works [1, xi]: they "require attention by anyone who wants to do theoretical work in the field."

Here, then, I have two aims. First, I want to trace, with the aid of Ryle's personal testimony, how he developed the conception of informal logic expressed and applied in *Dilemmas*. Then I want to examine that conception and to suggest what its value may be for those interested in teaching or studying informal logic.

Ryle tells us that when he went up to Oxford in 1919, he worked rather half-heartedly for Classical Honour Moderations, but "took greedily" to "the off-centre subject" of logic. "It felt to me like a grown-up subject, in which there were still unsolved problems." [6, p.2] In 1924 he became a lecturer in philosophy at Christ Church. As an undergraduate and during his first few years as a teacher, he found "the philosophic kettle in Oxford... barely lukewarm" and "Logic, save for Aristotelian scholarship... in the doldrums." [6, p.4]

By the end of the 1920's, however, things had started to look up. At the Joint Session of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society in 1929, Ryle struck up a friendship with Wittgenstein, whose *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* he had for some time studied and admired. What he found most admirable in the *Tractatus* was its central concern with "Russell's antithesis of the nonsensical to the true-or-false, an antithesis which mattered a lot to me then and has mattered ever since." [6, p. 5] During the same period he and five other junior philosophy tutors started the "Wee Teas," an informal dining-club that met once a fortnight during term, with the host of the evening

providing a philosophical discussion-opening paper after dinner. In conviviality, spirited dialectic, and far-ranging topics, the "Wee Teas" resembled the "Oriental Noetics," of which Edward Copleston, Richard Whately, and John Henry Newman were members in the early nineteenth century.

At about this same time, Ryle recalls [6, p. 7]:

...I got the idea, which I have retained, that philosophising essentially incorporates argumentation; and so incorporates it that, whereas a weak or faulty inference might by luck put Sherlock Holmes on the track of the murderer, a weak or faulty philosopher's argument is itself a philosophical blind alley. In this field there is no detachment of the conclusion from its premisses, if indeed the idiom of premisses and conclusions is appropriate here at all.

In the 1930's up to the outbreak of World War II, Ryle, like many others of his generation, was preoccupied with the logical positivism of the Vienna School. In his case this became part of a larger concern with the question "What constitutes a philosophical problem; and what is the way to solve it?" Gradually he acquired the conviction that the Viennese dichotomy "Either Science or Nonsense" had too few "ors" in it. This led him to harbor and to work on "a derivative suspicion" [6, pp. 10-11]:

If, after all, logicians and even philosophers can say significant things, then perhaps some logicians and philosophers of the past, even the remote past, had, despite their unenlightenment, sometimes said significant things. "Conceptual analysis" seems to denote a permissible, even meritorious exercise, so maybe some of our forefathers had had their Cantabrigian moments. If we are careful to winnow off their vacuously speculative tares from their analytical wheat, we may find that some of them sometimes did quite promising work in our own line of business.

Ryle's "suspicion" was strengthened by his occasional visits to the Moral Sciences Club at Cambridge where Wittgenstein held forth. He found veneration for Wittgenstein "so incontinent that mentions, for example my mentions, of other philosophers were greeted with jeers" [6, p.11]:

This contempt for thoughts other than Wittgenstein's seemed to me pedagogically disastrous for the students and unhealthy for Wittgenstein himself. It made me resolve, not indeed to be a philosophical polyglot, but to avoid being a monoglot; and most of all to avoid being one monoglot's echo, even though he was a genius and a friend.

Following his military discharge in 1945, Ryle returned to Oxford where he was appointed Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy. His inaugural lecture "Philosophical Arguments" seems in retrospect a remarkable anticipation of his later views on the relation of formal and informal logic to philosophical method. Here, Ryle's stated purpose is "to exhibit the logical structure of types of arguments which are proper to philosophical thinking." [7, p. 329] In attempting to achieve this, he discusses the logical powers of propositions, the sources of logical paradoxes, the diagnosis and cure of paradoxes, plausible objections to his views, the function of the *reductio ad absurdum*, systematic ambiguity, abstractions, crucial ideas, and cardinal ideas.

Informal logicians will find that Ryle's lecture repays careful study. I especially value it as a stockpile of brilliant but seldom fully formulated insights into the theory of fallacy. Of the many instances that could be adduced,

here are two:

The fact that people, however intelligent, never achieve a complete appreciation of all the logical powers of the propositions that they use is one which will be seen to have important consequences. It should be noticed that even mastery of the techniques and the theory of formal logic does not in principle modify this situation. The extraction of the logical skeletons of propositions does not reveal the logical powers of those propositions by some trick which absolves the logician from thinking them out. At best it is merely a summary formulation of what his thinking has discovered. [7, p.332]

The discovery of the logical type to which a puzzle-generating idea belongs is the discovery of the rules governing the valid arguments in which propositions embodying that idea (or any other idea of the same type) can enter as premisses or conclusions. It is also the discovery of the general reasons why specific fallacies result from misattributions of it to specific types. In general the former discovery is only approached through the several stages of the latter. The idea is (deliberately or blindly) hypothetically treated as homogenous with one familiar model after another and its own logical structure emerges from the consecutive elimination of supposed logical properties by the absurdities resulting from the supposals. [7, p. 338]

At about the same time as his appointment to the Waynflete Chair, Ryle was approached by his former tutor H.J. Paton who, as editor of the new series Hutchinson's Philosophical Library, invited him to contribute to it. Ryle agreed, without yet having settled on the book's theme. But, he recalls, "it was time, I thought, to exhibit a sustained piece of analytical hatchet-work being directed upon some notorious and large-sized Gordian Knot." [6, p. 12] For a time he considered the problem of the freedom of the will. In the end he opted for the concept of mind.

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The Concept of Mind was a philosophical book written with a meta-philosophical purpose. Five years later my *Tarner Lectures*, entitled "Dilemmas," were fairly explicitly dedicated to the consolidation and diversification of what had been the meta-theme of **The Concept of Mind**. [6, p. 12]

Even without this statement, now available for more than a decade, we would be justified in suspecting a more direct thematic relationship between the two works than most of Ryle's commentators have. Both are devoted to disclosing category-mistakes—or, as Ryle puts it in *Dilemmas*, to "removing conceptual roadblocks" and "freeing conceptual traffic jams." One such category-mistake involves the number and types of conceptual puzzlements customarily considered resolvable (or at least manageable) by the techniques of formal logic. Ryle clearly regard these as far fewer and far more specialized than many of his peers do.

A key passage expressing—indeed, insisting upon—the narrow utility of formal logic occurs near the end of **The Concept of Mind**. Ryle has, of course, all along referred to applications of logic from his opening statement of purpose: "The philosophical arguments which constitute this book are intended not to increase what we know about minds, but to rectify the logical geography of the knowledge which we already possess." [8, p. 7] The passage occurs in Chapter IX, "The Intellect." In it Ryle asserts a set of contrasts between formal logic, "taught from the start in the esteemed geometrical manner," and what

he here calls practical logic and in *Dilemmas* informal logic. Though the passage is too long to quote in full, the contrasts may be summarized thus: [8, pp. 306-07]:

Formal Logic	Informal Logic
reasoning taught in "contemplative idiom"	reasoning taught in "executive" (or "constructive") idiom
"cognizing" as being shown something	"cognizing" as working something out
inference as spectator-activity	inference as participant-activity
logical rules as licenses to concur in inferences	logical rules as licenses to make inferences
"seeing" an implication as a prelude of using any argument	"hearing" (or "reading") a promulgated argument as a prelude of "seeing" any particular implication

Rightly understood, this set of contrasts can aid us in evaluating the conception of informal logic presented and illustrated in *Dilemmas*. Some issues dealt with there (such as the fatalist dilemma, the Zeno dilemma, puzzles about perception, puzzles about pleasure) are traditional philosophic problems. Others (such as supposed clashes between the world of science and the everyday world, and between technical and untechnical concepts) are confusions likely to be felt by most laymen. Each issue, lay or professional, Ryle treats as a dispute between "apparently warring theories or lines of thought" and attempts to litigate plainly and unequivocally. To what extent he succeeds in each case will, of course, be judged variously. But, viewed sheerly as applications of informal logic the attempts are impressive.

The last lecture is programmatic. Ryle doesn't advocate dispensing entirely with formal logic. Yet he makes it clear that in their need to perfect the practice of "executive" or "constructive" reasoning, the philosopher and the intelligent layman are closer to one another than either is to the formal logician:

What I have been trying to think out during the course of these lectures is the ways in which live problems in Informal Logic are forced upon us, willy-nilly, by the interferences which are unwittingly committed between different teams of ideas. The thinker, who is also Everyman, learns, *ambulando*, how to impose some measure of internal order and logical discipline upon the players in his different conceptual teams. What he does not learn *ambulando* is how to contrast and co-ordinate team with team; how, for example, to contrast and co-ordinate what he knows about seeing and hearing with what he finds out in the course of developing his optical, acoustic, and neurophysiological theories; or how to contrast and co-ordinate what he knows about our daily control of things and happenings in the world with what he knows about the implications of truths in the future tense; or how to contrast and co-ordinate what he knows about the everyday furniture of the mundane globe with the conclusions of his theories about the ultimate constitution of matter. [5, p. 124]

The chief value of *Dilemmas*, then, for the student of informal logic is less in its precepts (helpful though these often are) than in its examples and its process-explanations.

Ryle has a synoptic approach to problems in logic. Everywhere in these lectures he invites the reader to acquire his own version of that approach. For the reader willing to respond, the acquisition can be exhilarating.

Notes

(1) Ralph H. Johnson and J. Anthony Blair, "The Recent Development of Informal Logic," *Informal Logic: The First International Symposium*, ed. J.A. Blair and R.H. Johnson. Point Reyes, CA, Edgepress, 1980, pp. 3-28.

(2) Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*. London, Cambridge University Press, 1958.

(3) Chaim Perelman and L.Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver. Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1969.

(4) C.L. Hamblin, *Fallacies*. London, Methuen, 1970.

(5) Gilbert Ryle, *Dilemmas*. Tarner Lectures. London, Cambridge University Press, 1954.

(6) Gilbert Ryle, "Autobiographical," in *Ryle: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. O.P. Wood and G. Pitcher. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1970, pp. 1-15.

(7) Gilbert Ryle, "Philosophical Arguments." Inaugural lecture as Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946. Reprinted in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A.J. Ayer. Glencoe, IL, The Free Press, 1959, pp. 327-44.

(8) Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*. N.Y., Barnes and Noble, 1949. ●

Note:

In May 1982, Ralph S. Pomeroy, who teaches rhetoric at the University of California at Davis, presented a paper on that campus titled "Modern Advocacy and Informal Logic Movement." The paper, which drew some lively discussion, was one in a series of Colloquies on Rhetoric. Pomeroy currently teaches courses in rhetorical research, method of advocacy, early modern rhetorical theory, and rhetoric in the news media. Three of these courses deal with topics and problems in informal logic.

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Editors' Note: The importance of Ryle's views on informal logic was pointed out to us some years ago in a private communication from Professor Nicholas Griffin (McMaster University), who referred us to Ryle's article, "Formal and Informal Logic," among others on a list of suggested additions to the "Bibliography of Recent Works in Informal Logic" presented at the First International Symposium and published in *Informal Logic*. We fear we may have been remiss in not sharing that information with our readers. In any case, we are glad that Professor Pomeroy's article will now serve to draw Ryle's views to the attention of others who may have overlooked them in this connection, and that it gives us an opportunity to acknowledge Professor Griffin's notice as well.